

A Change of Space



Above: Removing the carpet and painting the woodwork lightened the space, while adding new arches helped define the living/dining/kitchen areas. Decorative hanging lamps add '50s flair.

Before

How a St. Paul couple gained a whole new house without leaving their home.

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Back to the future: A 1950 dining set (above), inherited from the owner's great-aunt, was the inspiration for the subtle '50s theme of the remodel.

CONNIE FORD AND BOB POWER had a typical problem: They loved the St. Paul neighborhood they lived in, but their small, story-and-a-half home no longer met the needs of a growing family. Rather than move, the couple called on Minneapolis designer David Heide to maximize their existing space—and ended up with a solution that was anything but typical.

What started out to be a small kitchen renovation grew into a major remodeling project. "Everybody talks about 'our addition,'" says Connie, "but we tell them we didn't change the footprint of the house at all. It's the same space, it just feels like more and works a lot better for us." Bob adds wryly, "We could have bought a smaller kitchen table, but we decided to move the kitchen instead."

That's not the only thing that moved. After switching the kitchen to what used to be the dining area, Heide turned the former kitchen into a family room, changed the door to the porch, relocated the stair to the basement, and reworked the living/dining area—creating a light, airy space that flows easily from one area to the other.

"Part of what the homeowners are paying me for is ideas," says Heide. "And part of their responsibility is to edit those ideas and say how far they're

“In a small house, there are ways for rooms to become multi-purpose, if you put enough thought into the details,” says Heide.



Left: The custom center island is the hub for family activities. Here, Lucas and Caleb work on homework while Carol and Bob prepare the evening meal.



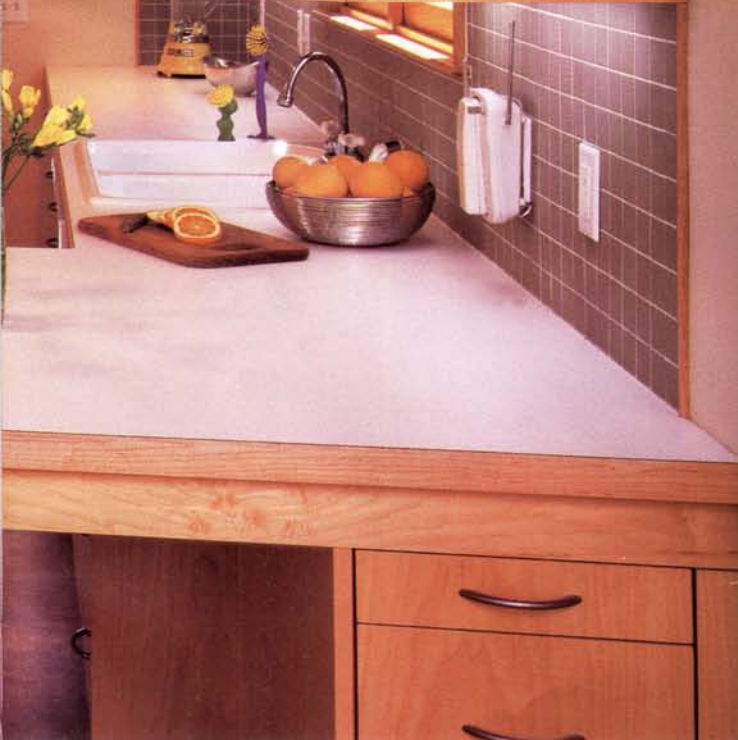
Before



Left: The new kitchen opens to the living room, adding ease to entertaining.



Above: "Actually, they're my mother's idea," says Heide, of his space-efficient kitchen drawers. Left: Caleb opens the entertainment section of the built-in wall unit, which also houses the back-hall closet and pantry.



willing to go." Connie and Bob, who had never worked with a designer before, went further than they'd imagined they could. "We knew we wanted to make changes, but on our own we just didn't have the vision needed," says Connie.

Reconfiguring the house was a fun challenge for Heide, who, as he puts it, "ran screaming" from a similar-style childhood home in Iowa to pursue a design career. Known for his work in restoring fine historic homes, Heide now sees projects such as the Ford/Power home as opportunities to help people stay put without staying stuck in an inefficient space.

"In a small house, there are ways for rooms to become multi-purpose, if you put enough thought into the details," says Heide, whose imaginative design has transformed the Ford/Power home. He turned one wall of the family room into a built-in unit that serves multiple uses—as a back-hall closet for the children's sports gear, a pantry for food storage, and an entertainment center that houses the TV, VCR, and stereo. Cleverly designed recycling bins are tucked around the corner. He also redesigned an awkward stairway and added a window to open up the transition between floors. And, although the kitchen is partially open to the living room, he managed to screen most of the view of the counters with a narrow ledge.

In the kitchen, a custom-designed island between the kitchen and family room has become the center of family activity. "It's where we eat most of our family dinners and we can even fit a few guests around it," says Connie, who also uses it as a bill-paying area. Their two young sons, Lucas, 11, and Caleb, 9, do their homework on it while dinner is being prepared. "Now they're able to be part of the action, but not be underfoot," Connie adds. Heide even included built-in speakers *Continued on page 53 >*



Left: "Before" and "after" floor plans show how the space was rearranged to work better without changing the footprint of the house.

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in the walls so the family can listen to music while in the kitchen.

Instead of expensive countertops, Heide suggested going with plastic laminate edged with wood and using the savings for custom cabinets, which cost only a bit more than stock. Heide designed the cabinets to be as efficient as possible, with lower drawers instead of doors. "With extensions on the drawers, you can open them all the way, making it easy to get to pots and pans," explains Heide.

Because the cabinets jog in and out, Heide used a small dropped soffit (about 5 inches deep) to make the ceiling look more organized. This created a simple rectangular shape, which he then repeated in the family room, visually connecting the two spaces. Although the 8-foot ceiling height remains, the soffit makes it appear as though it has been raised—an effect Heide accented by painting the ceiling "recesses" with soft colors.

Some additional changes Heide suggested throughout the home, in response to Bob's desire to "lighten things up," were to take up the carpet, refinish the wood floors, and paint the plain woodwork. Simple arches were constructed between the living room and the kitchen and dining areas to define the space—and add back detailing appropriate to the post-World War II home.

The subtle '50s theme—repeated in the design of some of the lighting fixtures, hardware, and custom light-wood kitchen cabinets—was inspired by a favorite dining set the couple had inherited from a great-aunt. Heide taped a picture of the table and chairs over his desk while working on the project. "I kept thinking, this table needs to be at home here when we're done," says Heide. "And I think it is."

Although they lived in the house during the remodeling, the family feels the inconvenience was well worth it. "While things were totally torn up, friends would come over and say, 'Why didn't you just move?'" recalls Connie. "But we like where we live. Now we're ready to remodel the upstairs—it makes such a difference when you use the space well." 🏡